

SHIPWRECKS- AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND AND OTHERS

This is a list of the "more important" shipwrecks that have occurred on or near the Australian Coast with an abridged, supplementary, list of those that have occurred on or near the New Zealand Coast. Sable Island is also mentioned.

There is evidence to suggest that there have been about 3000 vessels of all types lost in Australian and New Zealand waters. However, effluxion of time and inadequate records now make impossible the preparation of a list of all wrecks. It is for this reason that only the "more important" wrecks have been listed herein.

It is important to note that total losses only are listed. Vessels that have gone aground, been refloated and sent to sea again have not been listed. Likewise, vessels that have been stripped and deliberately sunk at sea, or sent to the shipbreakers yards, have not been included.

All reasonable effort has been made to include only data that is authentic. In some instances detail, (such as tonnage, lives lost, and precise dates) has been omitted if a reasonable presumption of accuracy could not be made. Much of the detail has been taken from personal and family records, although some has been culled from vintage newspapers and other printed material. Some of the information was provided by the Department of Shipping and Transport and for this I am grateful.

The first wreck on the Australian Coast is believed to have been that of a Dutch Vessel, "Batavia" in 1629. The first wreck on the New Zealand Coast is believed to have been that of a small ship "Endeavor" in October 1795. This vessel, at one time thought to be Captain Cook's vessel of that name was not so. Captain Cook's "Endeavor" was a Barque whereas this "Endeavor" was a Ship.

It will be noted that, although there has been great loss of life in some wrecks, many vessels have become total losses with ^{but} loss of life. At Port Phillip Heads where there have been many wrecks, great credit must go to the Lifeboat crews at Queenscliff, and in earlier years at Point Lonsdale, for the saving of life at sea.

Perhaps the heaviest loss of life in any one wreck on the Australian Coast occurred when the Ship "Cataraqui" went ashore on King Island in 1845. In this wreck 399 souls perished, 9 only being saved. Earlier, in 1835, the Ship "Neva" also wrecked on King Island, was responsible for the loss of 266 passengers and crew. In this case 15 persons were saved although another 7 made the shore but died of starvation before help arrived.

On the New Zealand Coast probably the greatest loss of life resulted from the wreck of H.M.S. "Orphans", a steam corvette on February 6 1863. In this case 189 souls were lost; 70 were saved.

Although this ^{tragic} list does not dwell upon wrecks and other total losses outside Australian and New Zealand waters, three particularly ~~traffic~~ cases in the Northern hemisphere will be mentioned. In addition the almost fantastic story of wrecks on Table Island will be told in brief.

The three particularly tragic cases referred to concerned "Titanic", "Empress of Ireland" and "Lancastria".

"Titanic", a beautiful new steamer and the pride of the White Star Line, on her maiden voyage from England to the United States of America, collided at night with an iceberg on April 11 1912, quickly sank, and took to the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean 1503 passengers and crew - 1347 men, 103 women and 53 children. Of a total of 703 who were saved, there were 315 men, 336 women and 52 children.

"Empress of Ireland" collided with a collier in the St. Lawrence River, Quebec, Canada, early in the morning of May 29 1914. 1012 lives were lost; 464 were saved.

"Lancastria", a transport (a converted Cunard-White Star Atlantic liner of 16,000 tons) was lost outside Saint Nazaire, France, on June 17 1940. Enemy bombing caused the loss of this steamer. Of the 4000 troops aboard "Lancastria" at least 2000 were killed during the bombing or went down with the ship.

In these three losses along^e, at least 4515 persons died.

And there is the fantastic story of shipwrecks on Table Island.

This island, crescent shaped and of sand formation is approximately 18 miles long with a width that varies from a few feet to about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile. Seas, wind, and currents have their effect on the day to day shape and size of the island and shoals that surround it. Weather varies between fogs and flat calms to mountainous seas and hurricane force winds. Material weather changes occur almost without warning. Sandbars build up, shift, or disappear almost overnight.

Table Island lies E.S.E. 220 statute miles from Halifax, Nova Scotia and W.S.W. 450 statute miles from St. Johns, Newfoundland. It is immediately outside the Gulf Stream, close to its junction with the Labrador current.

Known wrecks on this small island since the year 1800 total 500 with the loss of 5,000 souls. Vessels have included schooners, brigantines, brigs, ships, barques and about 18 steamers. Nationalities have included British, Norwegian, Portuguese, Danish, French, Canadian, American and German. One was H.M.S. "Barbados" which was lost in 1812.

An interesting and surprising feature of the wrecks on Sable Island is the fact that they have occurred continuously along the whole of the island's coastlines both North and south, and to some extent on shoals to the east and west of the island. A plot of the wrecks appears as someone said, "Like flies on a piece of meat".

The Island now is a Meteorological observing station. It has some radio navigational aids and means of communicating by radio with the mainland. Some years ago it had lifeboat facilities. In 1964 the population totalled 11.

Many and varied stories of the sea have been told. A brief and unusual story of the losses of two of the earlier Australian passenger steamers might not here be out of place.

The strange story opens with the departure, on March 23, 1911, of the popular passenger steamer "Yongala", from Mackay, Queensland, for Townsville. She was sighted when passing through Whitsunday Passage that evening, after which this fine vessel and her complement of 142 passengers and crew completely disappeared.

Almost exactly one year later, on March 20 1912, the new passenger steamer "Koombana", having departed Port Hedland for Broome in north western Australia also disappeared with all hands and without trace.

Several remarkable coincidences surround the losses of these two passenger steamers. Both vessels were owned by the Adelaide Steamship Co. Their tonnage was almost identical, "Yongala" being 3664 tons and "Koombana" 3668 tons. Their complements were approximately the same "Yongala" having on board 142 people and "Koombana" 117. "Yongala" was lost on or about March 23 1911, ^{while} "Koombana" was lost on or about March 20 1912.

Both vessels were lost on or about the same latitude - 19° south - "Yongala" off the east coast and "Koombana" off the west coast of Australia. But the most remarkable coincidence concerns a particular sea captain. This ship's Master was transferred out of "Yongala" into "Koombana" immediately before "Yongala" departed on her last voyage. He was then transferred out of "Koombana" immediately before she, in turn, departed on her last voyage.

Forty-seven years after "Yongala" disappeared her remains were found on the bottom of the sea off Cape Bowlingreen near Townsville. The remains of "Koombana" have not been found.

In this list, where tonnage is stated, all reasonable effort has been made to quote "Gross" tonnage. However, owing to a lack of precise data in some cases, the tonnage quoted might be other than "gross".

In the interest of space, the following abbreviations have been used :-

AS	Auxiliary Steamer	TSS	Twin, or triple, screw steamer	S	Ship
BRIG	Brigantine and the like	YAC	Yacht	SCH	Schooner
K	Ketch	BQ	Barque, including barquentine and the like	TUG	Tug
PS	Paddle Steamer			YWL	Yawl Yawl
SS	Steamship	MV	Motor vessel	CUT	Cutter (sailing)